
REFLECTIONS ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE IN THE THOUGHT OF METROPOLITAN ANTHONY BLOOM

Aleksy Kucy*

University of Lodz, Faculty of Philology, Pomorska 171/173, Łódź, 91-404, Poland

(Received 1 September 2023)

Abstract

Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, the founder and first head of the Orthodox Diocese of Sourozh in Britain. He had a talent for spiritual reflection and contemplation, which inspired faith and love for God in countless hearts, including those of people of other faiths. At the age of fourteen, he had a personal mystical encounter with Christ that transformed his consciousness and set him on an unusual path as the future head of the Orthodox Church in England. Metropolitan Anthony's popularity was due to the psychological depth of his views, and he stood out among 20th century Orthodox hierarchs due to his pastoral style, evangelism and outsiderism against prevailing trends in contemporary Orthodox Church life. This article explores Metropolitan Anthony's views on self-knowledge, which is emphasized in Orthodox theology as necessary for achieving a perfect personality.

Keywords: Orthodox, theology, spiritual, reflection, self-knowledge

1. Introduction

‘Apostle of love’, ‘outstanding arch pastor, spiritual mentor’, ‘true worker in the harvest of Christ’, ‘doctor of soul and body’, ‘friend’, ‘wonderful man’ - these and other terms are used to describe the founder and first head of the Orthodox Diocese of Sourozh in Britain, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom. Devoted to the liturgical life of the Church and displaying a talent for spiritual reflection and contemplation, Metropolitan Anthony inspired faith and love for God in countless hearts, not only among Orthodox followers, but also among people of other faiths, through his fervent prayer and powerful preaching. At the age of fourteen, Metropolitan Anthony had a personal mystical encounter with Christ after reading the Gospels for the first time. This experience transformed his consciousness and led him to see the world and people through the prism of God's love, setting him on an unusual path as the future head of the Orthodox Church in England. A distinctive feature of Metropolitan Anthony's work is that it was largely derived from his spiritual, liturgical and mystical life.

*E-mail: aleksy.kucy@uni.lodz.pl

Metropolitan Anthony's extraordinary popularity can be attributed to the psychological depth of his views, rather than his presentation style. According to hegumen Petr Mereshchinov, Metropolitan Anthony stands out among 20th century Orthodox hierarchs due to his pastoral style, evangelism, unique spiritual sobriety and outsidership against the prevailing trends in contemporary Orthodox Church life.

This article is an attempt to examine Metropolitan Anthony's views on *self-knowledge*. Orthodox theology emphasizes the need to achieve a perfect personality, which is impossible without understanding our fallen state. Different disciplines have different definitions of personality, but a person of faith, especially a teacher of faith, has a unique understanding of human personality based on their anthropological focus. As a doctor and theologian, Metropolitan Anthony believed that self-knowledge was the only process of theoretical and practical development of personality, of which he himself was a good example. As the contemporary researcher of the hierarch's homiletic work, Father Damaskin Lesnikov, rightly pointed out, "when we talk about Metropolitan Anthony's personality and his theological teaching, we should not separate these two vectors. His personality and his theology form an integral whole" [1]. Indeed, tracing the Metropolitan's biography, especially in the context of his spiritual development, reveals a close alignment between what he taught and how he lived. Not only did he live the Church's teachings, but he also promoted them to his parishioners in practical terms. Among other things, he said on this subject that: "as far as intellectual matters are concerned, perhaps our parishioners do not need the theology of Gregory Palamas, but as far as their spiritual life is concerned, if they are truly Orthodox Christians, they simply live the theology of Gregory Palamas" [2].

2. The self-knowledge for inner development

Metropolitan Bloom, in guiding his spiritual children along the path of inner development, emphasized self-knowledge as the initial method in growing in God. The ancient rule of *know thyself* corresponds as closely as possible, according to Peter Mikhailov, to the essence of Metropolitan Anthony's pastoral method and testifies to its roots in the patristic tradition. Furthermore, the scholar details three ways that characterise the metropolitan's theological workshop in the assimilation of sacred texts. (The first stage is a time of indifference, the second a time of critical approach and the third a time of full perceptual harmony [3].) The essence of these stages is the progressive growth in God and the discovery of the image of God within oneself, which ultimately leads to *self-discovery*.

The point is not to go against everything one would like to do (Christians refer to this as 'being virtuous', i.e. the more I want to do something, the more virtuous it would be not to do it), but to say, "Here are one or two points where I have discovered something that is right, authentic in me. I want to *be myself*, in a real way". The hierarch continues, "Please do so, and when you accomplish this

carefully, with the joy of being and increasingly becoming yourself, you will see how another light opens up, a common point, close in the few words that have enlightened you. In this way, you are absorbed by the whole of the Gospel, not in the manner of an occupying army that conquers you by violence, but by a liberating action, as a result of which you become yourself more and more. You discover that to be yourself means to be in the image and likeness of Him Who willed to be in our image so that we might be saved and transformed.” [4]

As Alexander Markidonov observes, in Metropolitan Anthony’s reasoning, “the reality of man is conceived as one that, firstly, finds its ontological place within through the mystery of God, and secondly, finds this place not as a balanced status in nature, but as an attunement to be attained” [5]. Therefore, “such a vision of the human being is not graspable, is not suitable for inclusion in discursive thought, while it can be presented in a distinguished reduced form, that is, in what we call anthropology”, the researcher of the hierarch’s work concludes [5]. At the forefront of such a treatment of the reality of the human being is this mysteriousness to which, following the apostle John, the hierarch draws attention: “The entire history of humanity shows how man senses the divine mystery and, through this mystery, finds himself, his importance, and the image of the man he should ultimately become in the depths of the mystery” [4, p. 34].

Growing in God is the process of discovering the mystery of the image of God that the Creator placed in the depths of our being, and self-knowledge is an essential part of this discovery.

3. The concept of personality

As he delves into his own depth and discovers himself, Metropolitan Anthony often mentions the concept of *personality*. He contrasts the secular, philosophical model of personality with the biblical model, and distinguishes between the terms ‘individual’ and ‘personality’. The former is a part of the personalist view, especially its theatrical perspective, and the Hierarch does not criticize it but rather reveals its inner workings. The fundamental conflict of an individual lies in self-determination based on opposition to another person, often based on negating the other on the principle of ‘I am like this because I am different, not like everyone else’.

As an individual, I exist by being fundamentally different from the individuals around me. This is what constitutes my ‘individual being’, and when I talk about contrasting, opposing, or differentiating qualities, I am talking about the distance I set between myself and others. This is an aspect of the state of sin and gives rise to disintegration, creating a series of self-affirmations. People resist the pressure of their surroundings to affirm themselves, but this self-affirmation leads to even more tension in their existence, consisting of rejection, negation, and resignation of others. This corresponds to being swallowed up, crushed, or destroyed by the other, regardless of whether the ‘other’ is an individual or a collective [4, p. 102].

The individual, for the hierarchy, is the limit of anthropological division, but this division is sometimes necessary for classification purposes. However, as a boundary of division, it is also a boundary of decomposition, not only in interpersonal relationships but also in the relationship with God. Interpreting the hierarchy in his vision of the *individual*, Markidonov writes: "Man in his empirical, social, psychological dimension, as a being with a definite nature and a definite mode of existence, is only 'matter' which should realize its destiny and find its proper integrity. This 'matter' is bound by the conditions of the fallen world, distorted by the inertia of sin. Such a human being, in the aspect and scope of his dependence on a nature tainted by sin, is called an 'individual' by Metropolitan Anthony." [5]

As individuals, says the hierarchy: "we are all divided within ourselves, torn between good and evil, with a separation occurring between our mental perception and our knowledge derived from experience. We are divided among ourselves because, to a greater or lesser degree, we do not understand, accept, or love one another. Therefore, the Church, although united in God, consists of separate members who constitute a divided body." [6]

This observation by the metropolitan is highly relevant from a contemporary perspective, given the widespread promotion of personal individualism. The modern message of 'be yourself', 'be original', 'be independent' is often portrayed as the most appropriate approach to human self-realization, but it is actually leading to a society of eccentrics and a growing mass of single-minded individuals. This regularity is due to the fact that individuality based on passions cannot produce different effects, just as there cannot be different effects of the same sin, which quickly consumes all possibilities, causing a constant return to the same thing. The hierarchy also draws attention to the phenomenon that the harder a person seeks to oppose another person, the more he accumulates qualities peculiar to the whole, which are increasingly less original, despite the illusion of opposition.

The hierarchy highlights the fact that man is not only born with a tendency toward alienation from God and others, but reinforces this in every sphere of his being. This negation should be given special attention. In defining ourselves in relation to society, be it secular or mystical like the Church, we always equate self-affirmation with rejection or resignation of the other. As soon as we accept the other, we can no longer affirm ourselves unapologetically. Sartre's words "hell is the others" [7] can be understood in this sense, with the 'others' being those who surround us irreversibly and from whom we cannot escape. This equates to self-exclusion. These words can be understood in this exact sense: these are the 'others' who irreversibly surround us, from whom we cannot escape anywhere, who have been mercilessly imposed on us, while it is we who would like to allude ourselves to them in such a way that they are the periphery and we, each of us, the absolute centre, benefiting from that serenity and certainty that possesses a focal point compared to the periphery [4, p. 104].

4. The category of love

According to Metropolitan, one important aspect of an individual's relationship with their environment is the renunciation of love. Since love is first and foremost the affirmation of another person, the recognition of the actuality of his or her existence, the acceptance of the fact that his or her being in time and space is ultimately an expression of God's will and love. It is interesting to consider the hierarch's interpretation of the category of love and the evaluation of human relationships from a personalistic perspective: "To love someone is, in particular, to recognise for them the right to exist, to give them 'civic rights' and to take a peripheral place in relation to them, and then from that periphery to move forcefully towards them, increasingly forgetting oneself. To what extent does this seem unreal to us, especially in the form I am talking about here. We become aware of the fact that we are surrounded by many people whose existence is simply an abstraction to us; they are furniture to us, oversized furniture at that, because they are constantly in our way and we have to avoid them or simply trip over them. We often refer to what should be called interpersonal relations as interpersonal collisions. [...] All we see is some dimension, some obstacle, an object preventing me from following my trajectory." [4, p. 105]

The category of love is generally the best criterion for evaluating many social and anthropocentric phenomena and regularities. Thus, in this case, when the hierarch, in assessing the negative value of an individual, uses the argument of love, it illustrates the crux of his problem, which is egocentrism. Patristic thought clearly blames this characteristic of fallen human nature for all the evil that has ever been done by man. It inevitably constitutes the first and at the same time the last bastion of sin to be overcome by climbing the ladder leading to God. Metropolitan Hilarion, on the other hand, counts egocentrism among the qualities testifying to man's ultimate divestment of authentic human qualities and connection to God, saying that modern humanity has been completely deprived of God, has been deprived even of its humanity. Anti-humanity, indifference to other people's suffering, unwillingness to help or share with others, openness towards other people, self-centredness and egoism are becoming commonplace on a cosmic scale. In the wilderness of the modern world, it is increasingly difficult to find a human being, that is, one who is willing to share with you joy and sorrow, holidays and weekdays, victories and defeats. Once Diogenes of Synopa walked the streets of the city, holding a lit candle in his hand and crying out: I am looking for a man! This utterance by the ancient philosopher has become fixed in historical consciousness as a symbol of how hard it is sometimes to find, among hundreds of thousands, millions, billions of people, a real human being [8].

Patristic thought, growing out of the New Testament axioms, also abounds in a moral-theological message in the light of which being a true Christian means striving to be like Christ, the One True Man in the literal sense of the word. This is why Saint Macarius the Great also says that, as in the abyss of the

sea a stone is surrounded by water, so these people [perfect Christians - author], being peremptorily submerged in the Holy Spirit, become Christ-like and have in themselves the unshakeable virtues of spiritual strength, inner impeccability, immaculateness and purity [9].

5. New Christian view of man

The novelty of Metropolitan Anthony's thought lies in extrapolating this spiritual regularity to interpersonal relationships. He sensitizes and teaches his listeners to give up their self-centred attitude towards their environment and to learn a new Christian view of man. He emphasises that since every human individual is of such great importance in God's eyes, it is all the more important for the Christian to look at him in a similarly Christocentric way: at work, on the street, in the shop, everywhere, in every person he encounters in his life, he should 'see' the human being. In this perspective, self-knowledge also plays a supporting role, because - by realising who you really are - you know who other people are and the treatment they deserve.

A second alternative definition of the human individual, namely the Christian concept of personality, is important in this regard. This second conception of personhood refers to the substance concept with regard to the relationship of the human individual with God as the Supreme Being and the only authentic Source determining his existence. In other words, the creative act itself, as a result of which man has been called into existence by God, is sufficient proof of his uniqueness, while the determinant of his personal uniqueness is his activity in relation to God and the whole of creation. In contrast to the individuum, personality is something quite different, the term does not correspond to our empirical knowledge of man, it has its justification in Scripture, to be precise, it is defined by the interpretation of Scripture, which explains to us who God is and who man is. A feature of personality is that it does not designate itself by opposing itself to another personality, by self-affirmation - personality is unique in itself. A comprehensive - it seems to me - vision of personality is given to us in Revelation, where it is said that in the future Kingdom of God everyone will receive a white pebble, and on this pebble a new name will be written, unknown to anyone except the one who receives it and except God (Revelation 2.17). According to the traditional Jewish understanding, which we find both in the Bible and in the surrounding tradition, name and personality are identical if the name is uttered by the Lord God when He calls each of us out of non-existence. Along with this, the name marks the uniqueness, the singularity of those relationships by which each of us is bound to God. We are 'incomparable', that is, we do not compare ourselves with anyone, because no one is similar to anyone in the sense of the same categories. There is a uniqueness that each of us is in relation to God, and in this sense personality is ineffable because it does not define itself by the way of opposites.

In other words, man's personality is insofar unique, unparalleled, in that it exists 'of itself' [4, p. 104], but it can express its uniqueness through a specific activity, which Metropolitan Anthony understood in the conceptual terms of the Apostle Paul, speaking of the Christ's reflection of the glory of God (Hebrews 1.3). This, in turn, gave him the basis for speaking of a 'perfect personality' and a 'perfect nature' [4, p. 103], which theologically revealed itself only in God. The first thing to which this mode of understanding the category of the human individual draws attention is the inevitable eschatology of personality, for in the case of its self-discovery and self-realisation, this process can only be completed at the time of the parousia. "Now we see as if in a mirror, obscurely; but then [we shall see] face to face: now I know in part, then I shall know as I have also been known" - says the Apostle to the Nations (1 Corinthians 13.12-13).

Hence, all temporal attempts to know the empirical human self are doomed to failure. On the other hand, the existential circumstances of the present day determine, as it were, the cognitive sphere, all the time reducing man to a world of individuals. The Hierarch states: "We do not know what 'personality' is in its original state precisely because of the catastrophe we describe as the collapse. As a result of this tragedy, instead of being a harmony composed of unique beings (as opposed to self-affirming and opposing individuals), instead of being a consonant melody whose key is God, we come to know personality solely through the tragic prism of divisive, isolating individuals." [4, p. 103]

6. The meaning of 'being a person'

Personality, then, that is, its Christian becoming and spiritual growth, is a kind of means of overcoming this division, of gradually freeing oneself from the bonds of the individuum and achieving the fullness of inner harmony with God and all creation. In this perspective, man's vocation has a much deeper meaning than simply returning to his original state of sinlessness. As we have shown above, its ultimate goal is *theosis*, divinisation, that is, *the* state in which man finds his true destiny, finds himself. On this occasion, a higher level of spiritual perfection was spoken of by Abba Isaiah the Hermit, who introduced the category of two natures - the nature of Christ and the nature of Adam, demonstrating the incomparable superiority of the former, which constitutes the role model for the Christian [9, p. 164].

The originality of Metropolitan Anthony's theological approach lies in the change of direction of thought from immanent to exogenous with a particular focus on the interpersonal dimension. In terms of Anthropology, patristic thought focused mainly on the inner world, conceptualising man's condition after the fall and the ways out of it. Man's healing resulted in an improvement in his relationship not only with the Creator but also with all creation. Organically based on this thought, the Hierarch in turn focuses more on the implications of sin, considers its external effects, showing ways to escape the impasse of parochialism. Hence, there are interpersonal relationships that occupy so much

space in his teaching. In the reconstruction of one's own personality and damaged mystical ties with the Cosmos, Christocentric love as a universal category plays a guiding role. Its beginning means nothing other than that someone who was around us a mere object, an indefinable presence, acquires personal qualities, becomes a face, a unique character. If, in this figure, the possibility of any relationship opens up to us, then we are no longer the centre around which the satellites revolve. Now we are almost on an equal footing; I say 'almost' because it takes a long time to overcome the impression that the centre is not the self. If we take such common categories as 'I love you', then 'I' is usually something that is written with a capital letter, 'I love' is a mere conjunct, while 'you' - in general a more indefinite thing. I think the whole process that should bind us to someone is as follows: We gradually discover that 'I' and 'you' balance each other out over time as 'I love' ceases to be a conjunct, a link between two pronouns, and acquires a new quality, transforming the relationship. It can then come to the point where the one who loves feels himself with the same intensity, but along with this he feels with no less intensity the person loved, gives them meaning, value. Further, if these feelings deepen, if the awareness of the 'other' increases, then already such a person realises that he is now a point on the periphery, and the person he loves - the centre in the not static, but dynamic relations of directed beings, turned towards each other [4, p. 106].

7. Love relationships in the Holy Trinity

Since the hierarch's thought is profoundly Christocentric and theocentric, he also points to the mystery of love reigning in the Holy Trinity when he tries to show the intended greatness of interpersonal relationships. As an example, the Metropolitan cites the reflections of Saint Gregory the Theologian, who - in justifying the belief in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - justifies the trinity of His nature manifested in Love. The expression 'God is Love' was understood by Metropolitan Anthony in terms of the majestic tragedy contained in the very Nature of God and illustrating His presence in the Universe.

Love [God's - author] is tragic. [...] We often forget this or even cover up this fact: tragedy is present in God. (The translator of the hierarch's speech from English into Russian states that he uses the English word 'tragic' in connection with its Greek etymology, referring to a sacrificial animal.) It usually seems to us that if we say this about God, we demean Him, we make Him vulnerable, not the great, all-powerful God of glory. This is because we lose sight of the fact that God's glory radiates incomparably brighter in His victimhood than if He resides in the tranquillity of a carefree existence, looking away from the tragedy of the created world. Tragedy is present in God because He - the God of love [4, p. 106].

In 2000, hegumen Hilarion published his work *The Life and Teaching of Saint Gregory the Theologian* [10], to which Metropolitan Anthony Bloom wrote the foreword. In the section on the dogma of the Holy Trinity, he also

emphasised the special role played in it by the mystery of love: "The Trinity, as understood by Saint Gregory the Theologian, is the union of three Persons, equal and co-equal one to the other, united among themselves by the bonds of love. The tri-unity in God is not an abstract idea, it is a truth that one comes to know by following God. The mystery of unity in tri-personality is also revealed to people in order to, among other things, teach them to live in unity, peace and love." [10, p. 147]

Perhaps influenced by this book, which he characterised as "a significant achievement not only in our theological understanding of one of the most eminent saints of the Orthodox Church, but also in the revelation of his personality" [11], a year later, assessing Saint Gregory the Theologian's theological discoveries on the Orthodox teaching on the Holy Trinity, he stated: "[Gregory the Theologian] asks the question: why is God not an arithmetical one, but a Trinity? He then goes on to answer it - If God is love, He cannot be a one, for the reason that then He would have no one to love but Himself. If God were two, the Two would love each other, and nothing else could take place. They, like a married couple, would hold each other in an embrace, look into each other's eyes, enjoy each other's company and strive to avoid anything that might disturb the mystery of their meeting. Saint Gregory continues: God is a Trinity because the presence of the Third shatters pseudo-unity, except that it does so in an extraordinary way. In order for one of the three to be able to love the other unreservedly, the third must agree to step aside and remain, if I may so express myself, on the side-lines, so that the two can love each other unhindered, without anyone's interference in contemplation and shared joy. [...] But if God is love, the same is true of each Person of the Trinity, all Three Persons at the same time. [...] This is a God in Whom tragedy is present, a God in Whom love and death are, as it were, the same thing, in Whom mutual love signifies shared boundless sacrifice." [11, p. 65-66]

The above quotation once again illustrates the hierarch's method in reading the meanings of theological and sacred texts. Although neither in Saint Gregory nor in his contemporary exegete do we find such an explicit statement, but if one reads the words of both theologians carefully, this is the conclusion one can draw from them. It is significant on this subject that Father John Meyendorff, in examining the thought of another theologian, Saint Gregory Palamas, on the Trinity, came to similar conclusions to those of Metropolitan Anthony and his younger brother in the priesthood. In his reflections on the subject, he stated, among other things, that "the real ontological existence of the Persons is revealed in their kenotic ecstasy directed towards one another. God's energies detect God's existence - God's Love, which pours out beyond the limits of God's nature, that is, into creation. They are the most outstanding proof of the tri-personality of God." [M. Fahey and J. Meyendorff, *Trinitarian theology East and West: Saint Thomas Aquinas - Saint Gregory Palamas*, Brookline, 1977, <http://lib.cerkov.ru/preview/6531>] Consequently, "if He, being a tri-personal God, reveals Himself *ad extra* in the energies as Life for others, the same is expressed in the eternal mystery of God's existence through the mutual relations

of the Three Persons. Therefore, the doctrine of uncreated energies is not only an affirmation of God's personal existence *ad extra*. It would be both impossible and nonsensical if God were not Love itself in Himself, if He were not a Trinity", the theologian concludes [<http://lib.cerkov.ru/preview/6531>].

It is no coincidence that in getting to know one's inner self, Metropolitan Anthony places love precisely as the answer to the question of the purity of one's feelings, the reality of one's relationships, the conformity of one's attitude to God's design. "[One should] try to identify, to evaluate the quality of one's friendship, of one's love for those with whom one feels connected. Then ask ourselves about the presence in these relationships of an element of repulsion, of opposition with which we want to wall ourselves off from those around us. We will then perceive how often man tends towards self-affirmation, we will see to what extent even the most close, sincere, friendly, fraternal relationships between two people are in fact repulsive relationships: 'Keep your distance, I'm afraid to melt with you, I'm afraid to disappear, I'm afraid to appear dependent on your love, I want to stay myself!'" [4, p. 107]

In the sick desire to be himself, man, according to the metropolitan, deceives himself by refusing to see the inner darkness within himself. For this is the reason why most people see themselves in colours. The Hierarchy therefore recommends a decisive rejection of egocentric *self-perception* and a sincere insight into one's own inner self - not everything one sees there will delight one, but this is no reason for despair. Inner work requires a great deal of effort, and in this aspect Antony Bloom's words resonate with the ascetic teachings of the desert fathers, for the problem is deeply rooted in fallen human nature.

8. The concept of man as an icon

On the path of spiritual perfection, in addition to the well-known sacramental means, including confession and prayer, the Christian should be guided, on the one hand, by a healthy self-perceptive attitude and, on the other, by full trust in God, who shows man the depths of inner flaws only within the limits of his spiritual strength and capacity. The eschatology of the personality makes it impossible for it to fully flourish in this temporal life, but it is possible to definitively change this vision by rejecting the prism of the individual and adopting the prism of the personality in biblical terms, that is, the prism of the image of God. In his reflections on this subject, the Metropolitan repeatedly analogises using the concept of man as an icon, which even when damaged or impoverished by certain vicissitudes of fate remains a holy relic. The same is true of the image of God in man: "The Lord God opens up for us a vision of the beauty that He Himself sees in man. [...] Looking at us, disfigured by sin, God sees us as we might see an old desecrated icon, one of which even little remains; after all, when we take such an icon in our hands, we look at it with great concern, pain and horror that such a holy relic has been desecrated, that such beauty has been distorted.... In the same way God looks at us." [4, p. 95-96]

The Metropolitan urges us to look at ourselves and every other person in the same way. It is not easy, but by being aware of what a person is, or rather who a person is in God's eyes, and by being willing to 'see by looking' and 'hear by listening', it is possible to see the depth in every person. According to the hierarchy, the obstacle to this is not only egocentrism, but people's fear of someone else's suffering, their fear of sharing in that suffering. That is why he also gives his prescription in this situation: "[It is necessary] to overcome the fear of selfishness, which consists of the fear of losing the peaceful life, of the shakiness of the prosperity we have achieved, of the loss of light, of the dimming of joy. For the most part, each of us sees himself as the centre of life, not only his own, but also that of other people." [4, p. 98]

Since the London hierarchy's teaching is profoundly Christocentric, the culmination of this thought is the Son of God, the Word made Man, in his reflections on self-knowledge and human personality. In the case of Christ, the fullness of His humanity excludes any eschatology, especially if we are speaking of the Divine Image achieved in His nature, that is, which in Metropolitan Anthony's theological presuppositions takes on a universalist significance.

When we speak of this, we should realise that we are speaking of the most sacred thing that exists in us, something that only God knows, the image of God, which is not a mere imprint but a life force inserted into our being that changes, transforms us; even if it happens slowly, we become participants in the divine nature [6, p. 857].

This positive dimension of the human being is a specific capacity built into our nature, an 'ability' to transcend this nature, to uniquely fulfil its destiny in *the key of God's design*. It is the capacity to respond to God's call to enter the realm of mystery, beyond the limits of our natural capacities, to become *a personality* [5, p. 33].

9. Finding oneself in Christ

Based on the teaching of the Apostle Paul, he introduces a spiritual imperative that is topical from the point of view of personality development, consisting in the need to "find oneself in Christ and Christ in oneself" [4, p. 112]. It could have been about the whole of apostolic teaching, although it is likely that the hierarchy was particularly inspired by the statement in Colossians 1.26-29: "This mystery, hidden for ages and generations, has now been revealed to His saints, to whom God wished to make known how great is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. It is Christ in your midst - the hope of glory. This is what we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that *every man may be made perfect in Christ*. This is what I toil for, fighting by His power which works mightily in me." The editors of volume one of the metropolitan's works here suggested other references (Philippians 2.5 and Galatians 4.13), which are unlikely to be related to the postulated imperative. Compare with [6, p. 301]. This imperative was admittedly assessed by the hierarchy very soberly, realising that it could be perceived as

something extraordinary. Therefore, he began the development of this thread with a question - "How do we find Christ where everything indicates that He is not there because He has been completely blurred in layers of distorting contours [reference to the iconic theme]?" [4, p. 112]

The answer, in his view, lies in the Christian's ability to assimilate transcendence through the doctrine of faith flowing directly from Scripture, to be able to read its contents sincerely and to weave them into his daily life. The similarity between Metropolitan Anthony's soteriological approach and the more recent anthropology of the faith as issued by the contemporary Hesychastic Fathers is significant in this context. For example, Father Porphyrios Kavsoulakivite (famous Greek clergyman, monk of Saint Mount Athos, mystic of the Orthodox Church), who presented a very interesting school of spiritual growth, said that one should not overcome evil by focusing one's attention on it. We do not persecute the darkness, but turn to the Light, which is Christ. He said to his disciples: "Why should we persecute the darkness? Let us turn on the light and the darkness will disappear. Let us allow Christ to reign fully in our souls, then the demons will flee of their own accord. [...] Into a soul that is fully occupied by Christ, the devil will not be able to enter for anything, because he will find no place there." [http://www.phys.uoa.gr/~nektar/orthodoxy/gerontikon/porphyrios_sayings.htm] Thus, the Hagiorite instructed that entering into the Light of Christ means showing interest towards the passions, the demons, and the world. Christ, who is All, does everything for the salvation of man. Thus, man's task is to accept His saving action, to turn towards God, to strive constantly and fully towards Him. The old man understood love for Christ in this way, to love Him perfectly. "We should try to find a way to enter the light of Christ. It is not about doing some kind of duty. It is to be with Christ, so that the soul awakens and loves Him, becomes holy, so that it gives itself over to the embrace of God's love. Then He will also love us. Then we will be filled with unspeakable joy. Christ wants this most of all, to fill us with joy, because He is the source of joy. This joy is the gift of Christ." [12] It is worth noting here that the above recommendation does not at all imply giving up the struggle against sin, as described in detail by the desert Fathers, but the correct prioritisation of spiritual growth. What, then, is the aforementioned soteriological commonality between the views of Metropolitan Anthony and contemporary Hesychastic thought? In an attitude of openness and sincerity towards the teachings of Christ and the message of God piercing the mind of man like a lightning bolt, reaching the deepest parts of his soul.

In a similar way to the twentieth-century Hesychasts, the hierarch urges his listeners to open their hearts and minds to the word of God. On a practical level, this involves recommending that Scripture, especially the Gospels, be read as often as possible, highlighting those parts of the text that resonate in the inner depths of the reader. When reading the Gospel, one can see that there are two or three places in the text that illuminate the mind, ignite the heart, the will focuses on the desire to fulfil these words because they are so wonderful, so true, so perfect, that they resonate with what one has inside. It is still important to be

honest with oneself and with the message contained in the Scriptures. Acceptance must not be 'faked'; it must be presented with one's being. This is a dangerous endeavour on a global scale, not just on an individual one. For the Metropolitan, the Gospel is a rigorous document, it is unconditional and expresses this clearly - it must not be modified, divided or adapted to the level of one's own understanding or taste. It is true that the Gospel proclaims something that in some sense surpasses man, so it is given to enlarge the mind, to enlarge the heart, to remodel life, to give a worldview often contrary to the one man held before.

10. Conclusions

Thus, in considering the question of self-knowledge and the soteriology associated with it, the metropolitan distinguishes between two types of self, or two ways of treating the human self, depending on the subject context. 'The self' as an individual affirms itself by negation, by opposition to other 'selves'. Such an individual does not want to see himself as he actually is, because he is ashamed of his degeneracy. "Such a self never wants to be real, because being real means standing before the Face of God and people. Such a self does not want to hear what people say about it, much less what the Lord God, the Word of God, says about it." [4, p. 114]

On the other hand, the hierarch introduces the concept of a personal self, which is found in the biblical field. Such a self only seeks its own personality, which is synonymous with the image of God, with God's design, which embraces all people in general and each individual, and which should ultimately be fulfilled in eschatological time.

Such a personality finds its self-realisation, its fullness and its joy only in recovering its prototype, its perfect model, and one that suits it, that frees it, that helps it to flourish, to discover itself [4, p. 114].

The journey towards realizing a *personal self* often results in the gradual disintegration of the individualistic self, until it finally disappears completely. The personal self that wins the battle against sin will then become a personality in the full sense of the word, it will become a *person* in the evangelical sense. In this new form it will be able to participate without hindrance in God's harmony, in God's love, in God - this is the central anthropological message conveyed through the teachings of Metropolitan Anthony Bloom.

References

- [1] D. Lesnikov, *Prizvanie i smysl žizni človeka na primere ličnosti i bogoslovija mitropolita Antonija Surožskogo*, in *Čelovek v bogoslovii mitropolita Antonija Surožskogo. Doklady Vtoroj meždunarodnoj konferencii 11-13 sentjabrja 2009*, Fond 'Duxovnoe nasledie mitr. Antonija Surožskogo', Moskva, 2013, 49.
- [2] A. Surožskij, *O vstreče*, Satis, Moskva, 1994, 154.

- [3] P. Mixajlov, *Bogoslovskij metod vladyki Antonija*, in *Čelovek v bogoslovii mitropolita Antonija Surožskogo. Doklady Vtoroj meždunarodnoj konferencii 11-13 sentjabrja 2009*, Fond 'Duxovnoe nasledie mitr. Antonija Surožskogo', Moskva, 2013, 38.
- [4] A. Surožskij, *Čelovek pered Bogom*, Praktika, Moskva, 2000, 38.
- [5] A. Markidonov, *Tajna čeloveka: Mitropolit Surožskij, Antonij i nekotorye osobennosti svjatootečeskoj antropologii*, in *Čelovek v bogoslovii mitropolita Antonija Surožskogo. Doklady Vtoroj meždunarodnoj konferencii 11-13 sentjabrja 2009*, Fond 'Duxovnoe nasledie mitr. Antonija Surožskogo', Moskva, 2013, 27.
- [6] A. Surožskij, *Trudy. Kniga vtoraja*, Praktika, Moskva, 2007, 856.
- [7] J.P. Sartre, *No exit (Huis Clos). A Play in One Act, The Flies (Les Mouches). A Play in Three Acts*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1952, 47.
- [8] I. Volokolamskij, *Bogoslovie mitropolita Surožskogo Antonija v svete svjatootečeskogo Predanija*, in A. Surožskij, *Trudy. Kniga vtoraja*, Praktika, Moskva, 2007, 20-21.
- [9] Svjatitel' Makarij Korinfskij, *Dobrotoljubie*, Sibirskaja Blagozvonnica, Moskva, 2010, 132-133.
- [10] I. Alfeev, *Žizn' i učenje sv. Grigorija Bogoslova*, Torgovyj Dom 'Poznanie', Moskva-N'ju-Jork, 2000.
- [11] A. Surožskij, *Uverenost' v veščax nevidimyx. Poslednie besedy (2001-2002)*, Nikea, Moskva, 2012, 65.
- [12] G.P. Kavsokalitu, *Vios ke Logi. Iera Moni Zoodokhu*, Iera Moni Zoodokhu Pigis-Chrisopigis, Chania, 2006, 221-224.